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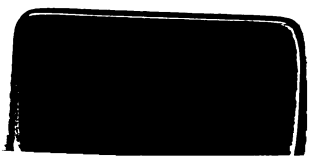

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WHAT IS A PICTURE?

WHAT IS A PICTURE?

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PREFACE

THE following is an attempt to explain to the uninitiated what a picture is. The task is a peculiar one, and though the writer hopes that he may not fail in his endeavour, he is not too sanguine of success. He consoles himself, however, with the belief that if he has not accomplished what he has tried, his explanations, comparisons, and theories may put the novice on the road to Art comprehension in the widest signification of the word. Though he uses the word "Art" in various senses, the reader might kindly bear in mind that it is generally employed as meaning pictorial art.

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WHAT IS A PICTURE?

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS ART?

IN writing for the novice in pictorial art criticism it may be well to give a slight sketch of the history of art. The earliest evidence of mankind's interest in art is to be found in some of the rude productions of primitive man. His weapons and implements are discovered decorated with drawings of wild animals, and his cooking and other utensils are ornamented in a crude fashion. Among all savage nations this same elementary spirit of the artistic is found. When prehistoric man decorated any of his possessions, he reproduced the mental impression of what he saw, and it is invariably found that all his carvings or drawings of animals convey life and motion to a wonderful extent. He was, in fact, a true impressionist.

The first evidences of the rise of art, in the wider sense of the word, are discovered in Babylon and Egypt. The remains of Babylon and Assyria are so fragmentary as to prevent us from comprehending to the fullest extent their artistic quality, but in Egypt we have more complete testimony as to the extraordinary merits of the craftmanship of the men who lived on the banks of the Nile. Of course the capacity of the Egyptian and Babylonian artists as colourists cannot now be judged, as time has destroyed their work in this direction. Greek art, which undoubtedly, at least as regards sculpture and architecture, reached the utmost perfection of all that the world has ever produced, shows strong evidences of the influence of Egypt. What ability the Greeks had as colourists it is impossible to say, although we can presume from the extraordinary perfection of their statuary, their poetry, and their drama, that their pictures would be equally meritorious. The incidents which have been recorded of various Greek painters and their works tend to show that these were of the very highest order. Roman art distinctly owes its qualities to Greek influence, and coming still nearer the present day we have Gothic and other forms which are essentially characteristic

of the Middle Ages until we come down to the many varieties of art in our own time.

The Anglo-Saxon race does not naturally possess artistic appreciation to the same extent as the Latins do. This may be seen at a glance if we survey the monuments in Westminster Abbey. It is appalling to look at many of these terrible abortions, and it is almost incredible that better sculptors could not be found. And although great advances have been made during the past few decades in this respect, the British nation cannot be regarded as possessing the artistic faculty to any considerable degree.

Fashion asserts itself in the art world as well as in other walks of life. The works of certain painters or decorators become popular, perhaps through the personality of the artist, the influence of his friends, or incidental happenings. In the same way schools of art are popular with the public for a time. These fashions affect the commercial value of artistic productions, though their intrinsic merit does not change. But who is to determine what is artistic and what is not? There are many ways in which the artist's work can be judged. The individuality of the critic must always be held in mind when one is considering his criticisms.

Generally, however, it will be found that the position of a great artist, in the gallery of genius, is fixed after his works have been known for a great many years, and that capable art critics will agree as to his qualities. As time settles literary, musical, dramatic, and every other kind of artistic merit, so it is with painting. The daubs and works of inferior and mediocre value disappear, but the productions of the great artist live and command acknowledgment.

A great many expressions have been invented to describe the meaning of the word "Art," but the results are satisfactory only to particular individuals according to their beliefs and likings. At the same time, in a general sense, it may be said that the function of art is to foster that part of our nature which is not developed by the purely intellectual life. A picture presents an idea of beauty to the observer, and besides this quality it compels the mind to conjure into existence a microcosm of beautiful thought. While it may be stated that the quality which enables us to appreciate art is more psychological than intellectual, it is necessary in considering it in a critical sense to admit that it has two sides, classical and romantic, otherwise intellectual and emotional. There is much more

poetry in the latter than the former, and the same thing may be said of music and literature. The classic is very apt to degenerate into something from which the spirit has disappeared and nothing but form is left. In the history of painting this has often been exemplified. A certain school of painting, the offspring of a man who is cut out of big material, gradually changes its character, losing its vitality until all that was admirable has disappeared and eccentricity and the commonplace alone remain. A reaction then takes place, generally brought about by some individual of genius and ardour, and the same history with evolutionary changes repeats itself time and again.

The chief aim of the artist should be to produce what is beautiful. It would be impossible for highly strung and emotional individuals to endure this life, but for the subtle bonds which knit them together through the medium of art in its highest sense. Art affects the most matter-of-fact person often unknown to himself. To live in an absolutely materialistic way without the glamour, which art instils into every walk of life, is repellent to even the most prosaic. It compels the most unreflective individuals on occasion to leave what

is sordid and consider what, though unreal in one sense, to the true artist is actuality itself. Some philosophers contend that the world in a future stage of development will be governed by intellect only and that emotion in human beings will have ceased to exist. They hold further that art which is non-emotional is greater than that which appeals to the feelings. But human nature can hardly comprehend this idea. It is like trying to picture eternity. A world in which the inhabitants neither loved, hated, hoped, envied nor pitied, does not appeal to the average person as an improvement on our own workaday world with its surprises, disappointments, hopes, fears, vanities, and all other variations which are played on the gamut of human emotion. Painting has been designated as an art which is expressed through the medium of pencil or pallet and brush. Painting and sculpture may be described as the poetry of the vision, as music, oratory and verse are the poetry of the ear, although verse appeals to a kind of inner sense of hearing which we have, and even music can be enjoyed by the facile reader without a sound being heard. He can mentally go over an opera and in his mind hear every note.

Some people are content to say that the objects of art are—

(1.) To enable us to remember what interests us and to retain representations of what is beautiful.

(2.) To lift us out of the real world into an imaginary world and make us live for the time being in the past or future.

(3.) To express what cannot be expressed by the material only and to enable individuals of a certain temperament to communicate with each other in this higher atmosphere.

Art, whether represented as painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature or acting, must be convincing. When the critic considers an art production he must feel satisfied with what he sees or hears, and doubt must be absent from his mind, or the subject of his analysis is not the work of genius. The qualities of what he criticises must be of such balance and merit that the *tout ensemble* asserts itself to his mind, demanding recognition and claiming consideration on the basis of a high artistic standard. On the stage this is evinced when the actor so plays his part that the

onlooker forgets that what he sees is acting. If this is so, clearly the performance must be convincing. An audience which is being entertained by a number of performers may listen approvingly to most of them, but when they hear the "real thing" they are startled out of themselves. As a man, who endeavours to persuade a friend, succeeds according to the strength of his own belief, so it is with the work of art. It convinces us in proportion to the qualities which, grouped together, make a demand on the critic which he cannot resist.

Though art in any of its forms is governed by certain rules, these are occasionally broken for the sake of getting striking results. The greatest of our poets sometimes break the laws of prosody to produce some particular effect, and in music we have the same thing. Handel once put five crotchets in a 4-time bar of music. At the same time, of course, these rules cannot be put aside except on extraordinary occasions or the artist's work ends in extravagance and absurdity.

The meaning of the word Æsthetic is little understood, but to the average intelligence it probably means abnormal. The extremely æsthetic

individual may lack sanity in his judgment of material matters, but as regards things artistic his criticism is not often wrong. The capacity to write poetry indicates a certain amount of mental bias, which, while we hesitate to call it unsoundness of mind, evinces a lack of intellectual balance nevertheless. In the psychic world there is a secondary sense of proportion, and artistic and poetic efforts must fall into line with this standard. The individual who leads a purely animal life, providing for his bodily wants and totally ignoring this other world, has an absolutely sound mind, and it is when judged by this standard that the æsthete may be said to have an intellect which is abnormal. The existence of another world of thought of some kind, however, must be admitted by the most prosaic individual, and in discussing art we must project ourselves into this other atmosphere. Some critics have declared that the object of art is to bring to light the absolutely true which underlies the aspect of the universe, and to find what is enduring and educative in the highest sense of the word, and that the artist is a seeker after truth. The medium through which he declares his ideas and opinions is an emotional one as opposed to that of the scientist which is purely intellectual and

based on facts. But humanity is dominated by emotion, it governs the world's developments, and shapes its history, and is much more powerful in wielding the rod of destiny than mere intellect. For example, consider the case of two men of equal ethical qualities, one being emotional and the other stolid and prosaic. The emotional one can get into touch with his fellows on the shortest notice, and has always hosts of friends, whereas the other, though as a citizen and a man equally meritorious, finds it difficult to surround himself with genial companions, and has always a hard task before him when he has to make a new acquaintance.

The various qualities of our ancestors reproduced in ourselves and compounded with other qualities resulting from environment and accident, produce peculiarities, eccentricities, and contradictions of character without which life would be dull in the extreme. Thus we meet the strong-willed person with the puny body, the giant with the feeble mind, the ugly man with the beautiful soul, the individual who has the mind of a satyr with the face of an Apollo, and a hundred and one paradoxical combinations which keep romance alive in the most matter-of-fact age.

Art must always be associated with what is romantic and bizarre. All the glamour of the world exists in the future and the past; the present is almost always prosaic, and the work-aday element of life insists on making itself heard.

According to Nietzche, art began when animalism declined in vigour. He believed that man became a thinker when his physical power grew less through illness or exhaustion, and, continuing his argument, contended that the human mind must necessarily be influenced by bodily condition, and its beliefs and actions qualified by timidity, fatigue, and the diminished strength of his physical feelings of activity and active enjoyment. This, he argued, was the beginning of the artificial methods of living which now dominate the world with absurd and meaningless etiquette, the rules of which must not be broken under any consideration. All art, according to some opinions, is evidence of decay of some kind, and it is certainly true that all great nations which have passed away had a period of artistic excellence during the time of their decadence: Assyria, Egypt, Greece, and the Venetian Republic all attest the truth of this. The Jewish nation, which was debarred from the consideration

of reproductive art, shows national strength and virility which has never been equalled. It has survived the most trying conditions for centuries, and as yet shows no sign of decay. Art may mean decadence of the pristine animal qualities of mankind, but in these days of sociological advancement, is this not a step forward on the evolutionary road? May not this much-discussed state of things merely be a stepping-stone to something better?

There is a certain standard of beauty which the mind conjures into existence in a vague manner, and the artist of genius is continually endeavouring to produce this in his works. The painter of mediocre talent fails, because, although mentally he may see as clearly as his more illustrious compeer, his technical capacity and the magical unity of brain, hand, and eye, which the genius possesses, is lacking in him. It has been said that we are all poets, but cannot give proper expression to what we feel, and the same thing applies to painting and any other branch of art. All of us can picture a canvas with a magnificent composition looking out from it, but as soon as we seize pencil and brush, and try to reproduce what our mental eye saw, the vision fades and disappears. In the same way,

on looking at a beautiful landscape, or a sunset across the sea, the spirit of a poem passes through the mind, and in a measure its purport seems clear, but as soon as we lift the pen our fairy castle has vanished for ever.

To a large extent art is absolute and intrinsic. An educated Japanese appreciates to the full the beauty of Greek sculpture and Gothic architecture, and in the same way if Phidias were alive, without doubt, he would admire quite as much as any modern the beauty of Japanese decorative art. But this in a great measure is often obscure to the eye which is uneducated, artistically speaking. Fashion, through caprice or personal influence, magnifies the merits of certain artists or of a particular school of painting. But the inherent value of artistic work will eventually make itself felt and command the appreciation of those who are competent to judge. The artificiality of modern civilisation and the dominating power of commercialism may often obscure for a period the merits of men of genius and their productions. But even these forces give way before the march of time. The true artist is always battling against artificiality. His mind must be kept open to receive amendment. This is absolutely necessary for those

who march under a banner of advancement. All great artists admit that they are continually learning something new, and even when they work upon an old theme they exhibit it in a new guise, and their work has always sufficient novelty to preserve it from the commonplace. Talented painters under the influence of commercialism sometimes settle into a groove and produce pictures of uniform style and merit simply because that particular kind of work is always marketable. But this is all the worse for their fame when their work comes to be considered in the larger sense by the judicious critic. A reputation built by means of advertising and pandering to the demand of the public for cheap sentiment served up in an attractive way on canvas, will never withstand the fusillade of the thousand critics who, in course of time, will assail it and expose its weaknesses to the public gaze. Many persons, though possessing no faculty for truthful comprehension of what is artistic, can talk on the subject of art for hours on end. In fact, there is no limit to the meaningless vapouring about pictures which individuals like these are responsible for. It is so easy to use phrases well known to the world of art criticism, and calculated to impose upon people who do not specially interest

themselves in things artistic. Painting being a subject which is little understood by the man in the street, naturally he cannot be expected to place the proper value upon the juggling of critical charlatans.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS A PICTURE?

WHAT is the object of a painter in painting pictures? To arrive at an answer to this question it is as well to ask ourselves what is the object of the poet in writing poetry, or the musician in composing music? The artist in every case is compelled by some force within him, and this force, though perhaps it will not be admitted by some people, is to a large extent love of the approbation of his fellows. He is also, in some degree, induced to produce the fruits of his intellect through the romantic side of his personality, demanding something tangible, if the expression may be used about music or poetry, in connection with pleasant memories or associations. This, combined with his intrinsic love of the beautiful and his desire for appreciation, forms the motive power which impels him to create a picture, poem, or piece of music, as the case may be. Almost every one who does his

best is influenced by this same desire for approbation. Some people might deem this vanity, but if it be the wish to please the best part of humanity, it is a very desirable quality indeed. Of course we must not forget that there are many minor influences at work which impel the artist to some extent to produce the best work he can, but ambition is the main factor in his determination to do something which shall be far removed from the commonplace.

Some people by intuition know what is artistic. Others through association learn to discriminate between what is ugly and what is pretty, and even dullards, if they possess the quality of continuity, can acquire to a considerable extent the faculty which enables them to realise what is artistic. It must be observed, however, that even those who have a natural talent for art criticism must be associated with good pictures for a lengthy period before their opinions have substantial value. The tendency of man being towards a belief in his own likings, he feels that anything contrary is wrong, and this leads to particular fashions, schools, and many other minor classifications in human life. Painters and art critics being human, many schools and fashions exist and have existed. The art critic

finds it impossible to get over his personal likings, to get out of himself, so to speak, and to put aside everything which is likely to bias his opinions when he is criticising pictures. To a considerable extent he interprets a picture according to his temperament and partialities. This is exemplified when a painter regards the works of his fellow-craftsmen. In spite of himself he may be inclined to underrate the technique of other painters simply because his own methods and mannerisms are continually asserting themselves in his mind; for he both consciously and unconsciously believes that his own technique is preferable to all others. The individual of a sombre temperament will naturally like pictures, the suggestions of which are of a gloomy kind, whereas another of a cheerful disposition will prefer works bright in colour and motive. A critic who has spent his childhood at the seaside may have a penchant for sea pieces, while one born in the country will like beautiful landscapes. This important fact must be borne in mind when one endeavours to place the proper value upon the opinions of men who are recognised as great critics.

In painting there are various qualities that the critic will look for. To begin with, there must be a

suggestion of poetry in the composition, and a certain sense of mystery which stimulates the fancy. The painting which does not awake the imagination of the onlooker lacks the chief charm which a picture should possess. Colour must be pleasing and harmonious, and atmosphere, a most elusive quality, must be present, after which comes grouping and technique. As regards technique, almost each great artist has his own special methods of working, as each literary man has his own particular style. So long as breadth is retained, there is no need to cavil over mannerisms.

A picture may be a great artistic creation, although expressing nothing ethical, so long as the spirit of poetry is present. Painting has no more to do with morality than literature or music has. At the same time, the loftiest forms of painting present pure and elevating thoughts, and many great pictures combine altruistic motive as well as artistic charm. The religious aspect of a picture does not influence its merits in the slightest degree. The kind of picture which is most popular has been designated as belonging to the "Family Anecdote" school of painting. The subject or pictorial idea has little to do with the merit of the picture. It is treatment which gives quality. Of

course one might say that a beautiful landscape with trees and running water is bound to make a more attractive picture than a dirty street, and certainly this is true so far, but a great artist, such as Whistler, in painting the street will change and recreate it, and with his magic touches render his picture instinct with the spirit of what is artistic. Naturally it is admitted that something must exist in what is to be painted which will enable the painter in his reproduction to give it the necessary qualities which make a picture. For instance, it would be absurd to paint a chair or some other similar object. No painter in doing so could produce a picture. But what is emphatically to be observed is that the subject matter has little to do with the quality of the artist's production. A painting such as the "Motherless Child," in which a poor waif is depicted sitting, cold and hungry, unobserved by the passing crowd, appeals to the better part of human nature, but it does not make the picture artistic. It might be very badly painted indeed, but nevertheless the maternal instinct in every woman who regarded it might be touched at the thought of the lone infant. It is very hard for one who has not had an extensive association with pictures to shake himself clear of the influence of

sentiment of a meretricious kind. Every picture ought to be imbued with sentiment, but it must be suggested only to the imagination. The painter should do no more than this, nor should the poet. This carries with it a feeling of the mysterious, which is one of the chief charms of poetry.

Without doubt Landscape or Seascape, in any form, as the subject of a painting, gives the artist scope for variety of colour, form, grouping, and the sense of mystery which should assert itself in every picture. It also conveys to the critic satisfaction and general interest in the work as a whole, whereas a picture representing figures sometimes generates reflections in connection with human life, which to some extent may mar the soothing poetic sense of pleasure one should have on gazing at a great picture. Again, there are pictures which combine both figure and landscape, called *genre* studies, and here the characteristics of the former should obtrude themselves less upon the observer than those of the latter. Morland's pictures are of this kind, and though executed in a masterly style, appeal as much through the nature of his subjects as through his fine technique and execution. At the same time, a strong, broad human nature runs through all his works and gives them an individual charm which

many pictures in the same style lack. Generally speaking, pictures of this character degenerate into an illustrated story class of production which is not art in the highest sense, though sometimes furnishing pleasing suggestions of past or future happiness. For example, a picture of a seashore, with children playing, sunny skies above, and white sails in the distance, may be badly painted, yet the representation of the shore and the waves recalls good times spent at the seaside, and thoughts of happy days to come. A man may be a distinguished art critic and not altogether escape this feeling. Figure subjects, whether they be historical, anecdotal, or imaginative, are really more in the nature of stories than anything else. The subjects may be interesting, and the treatment good, but the artist's production is not a picture unless painted in an impressionistic, imaginative, and poetic manner. Allegorical pictures representing passions or other qualities of human nature such as hope, fear, or revenge, or one of the seasons, or such subjects as war, peace, industry, can be treated by the accomplished artist in a way which unmistakably stamps them as works of art. The execution must kindle the fancy, and the usual rules as to colour, form, grouping, etc., must be observed, but such a picture

is quite different from the anecdote school which usually illustrates a commonplace incident of every-day life. The productions of portrait painters must be pictures as well as portraits before they are interesting to the casual observer. The figures reproduced must have a kind of allegorical picturesqueness in their treatment before the critic can call them pictures. This is fully exemplified in the works of Sergeant, Whistler, and Lavery.

The artist who paints truthfully commands attention. By painting truthfully one does not mean painting with a regard for every detail as in the manner of still-life studies. Some observers might say a picture painted in this way was more realistic than that which simply gave broad effects and impressions, but the convincing composition is the one which represents to the eye exactly what the eye sees on looking at nature. This is true realism, although the expression is often misunderstood, and the picture with the detail of every object, whether near or far, shown with absolute clearness, is often mistaken for a most realistic picture. In actuality it is more of a mechanical drawing than anything else, and does not represent nature.

The most sordid mind must feel at times that

there is something better and nobler than materialism can produce at its very best, and the art which carries us into the ways which lead to this mysterious region is truthful, elevating, and sincere. The quality which is paramount in determining the value of pictures is one which enables us to escape the power of the merely material. All over the world, in every class, almost with every individual, there is a feeling which impels one to get away when one can from the commonplace. Poetry and romance make themselves heard under all conditions, almost without exception, to all men. Every one knows there is something better in the world than what money can buy. Many may not be able even to understand fully the feeling which exists in their minds, the result being that sordid individuals are met exploring the Continent, without knowing exactly why they do it. They may imagine they have gone there simply because it is *à-la-mode*, but it is the craving to get away from what is commonplace and materialistic. Poetry, through the medium of music, literature, the drama, or art, enables us to satisfy the desire of our better nature, and to escape the monotony of work-aday existence, and the more power a picture has

in achieving this, the greater it is as a work of art.

Artistic opinions cannot be accurately demonstrated any more than literary opinions, although time generally proves the sieve through which specious or biased criticism disappears and true value is retained. One can never be sure of a reputation till time alone has placed it in its proper niche in the Temple of Fame. The subject of a painting is unimportant in considering the result of the artist's labours, except that what is offensive to the artistic taste must be idealised as a lover idealises the features of his mistress. Whistler's works prove the truth of this statement. He strove for a harmony of colour and tone and satisfactory grouping, whatever his subject might be. It cannot be denied that many aspects of life are ugly and uninteresting. These do not tempt the painter to copy them realistically, though, as artists have shown us, from the most common things can be extracted that which is artistic and poetic. Indefiniteness is one of the necessary qualities of a picture, that is to say, indefiniteness which in reality represents what the painter sees. Impressionism, as moonlight or a little mist softens a landscape, ameliorates what is aggressive. It is

impossible to produce highly finished pictures imitating every detail of nature without hardness and loss of atmospheric effects. At the same time nothing is more common than to see a student of the impressionistic school painting with exaggerations and mannerisms, which, doubtless, he fully believes to be the individuality of genius, but to the critic they suggest eccentricity only. The relative value of breadth and detail must be accurately observed in a picture. In niggling for minor effects breadth and aerial perspective are often lost. Light and atmosphere are the dominant considerations in pictorial art. Atmosphere, in all its subtleties and varieties, is, without doubt, the most important element in a picture. Inability of the human eye to see detail at a distance, the colouring effect of the air itself, and the fact that while we look at a certain point in the landscape, all the surrounding objects are dim and hazy, make this quality one which presents almost insuperable difficulty to the artist. Atmospheric effect may be called colour, but it is possibly better for analytical reasons to differentiate between colour and atmosphere. The former is generally understood to embody harmonies. Colour composition may be used to express its meaning. People with primary

notions regarding art look at a picture and see something in the middle distance. Knowing that the object is constructed in a certain way, and is, on close view, detailed to a degree, they feel that a sketch of the object is wrong because through the inability of the human eye to see any small things beyond a certain distance and because the colour of the air hides details and changes colours, the more distant parts of the landscape appear dim and lacking in definition. The blue tints of far-away objects prove that the atmosphere itself is of a blue colour. Its influence over colours is felt to a certain extent from the very nearest distance, and over the whole subject of the picture produces an infinite number of effects by partial or complete loss of detail and slight or considerable change of colour. The love of hard microscopic still-life effects in a picture, which is inherent in many people, springs from the fact that they know such detail exists, but they do not consider the qualifying influence of relative position. For example, every detail in the configuration of an animal in the foreground of the observer is clearly shown. In the middle distance the minor features are lost. Sufficiently far off the animal simply becomes an obscure object without form or colour enough to

show what it is. But the unsophisticated observer, in an art sense, knowing what it is, expects in the painter's reproduction of the landscape that this animal should be shown with all details clearly defined. This can be seen in many pictures, but of course it is absolutely wrong. What one sees is simply a miniature animal which seems stuck on the picture like a scrap on a sheet of paper. The laws of linear perspective may have been observed with utmost care, but those of aerial perspective have been totally disregarded. The atmosphere, combined with the optical delusions caused by the incapacity of the human eye to perceive detail at a distance, gives the necessary half tints which clothe the mental impression with artistic reality and completeness. To some extent it is simply a matter of memory, which usually recalls outstanding things only, and so with a picture effect. What is wanted is the salient features and the general aspect of the whole. A picture is not the result of an attempt to mathematically reproduce, but of an effort to convey realistically in a poetic sense. Portraiture often fails to interest because it leaves little for the imagination. True art is always instinct with poetry and devoid of what is commonplace. The artist must ever guard

against representing what is trite, unless he has a capacity to reproduce what is the familiar in his own way and to imbue it with his own personality to such an extent that although in one sense it is hackneyed, in another it is interesting and novel. Of course, as every one knows, there is practically nothing new in the world. What is called new is probably the old in a different guise. Almost every idea has been utilised by painters, poets, and musicians, yet, despite this, the artist of individuality cannot reproduce an idea which may have been used many times before, without leaving the mark of his personality upon it and introducing sufficient novelty to satisfy the demands of the human mind for picturesque change.

The meaning of the word "tone" which is often used by critics may somewhat puzzle the beginner in art criticism. Tone really signifies the prevailing effect of light and shade in conjunction with colour. Some pictures give magnificent colour harmonies, but small evidence of chiaroscuro, and that will give tone of a certain character. On the other hand, the effect of light and shade may be particularly considered by the painter along with colour harmony, and that gives a different tone. One painter may strike a low shade-key, and attune the

whole composition to this pitch, while another may set his scheme on a high-light scale, which will give lightness and brilliancy to his work. Each of these gives tone effects of a peculiar kind, and there are many other methods by which the artist produces peculiar tone effects.

The decorative sense is pleased with impressionistic effects, and the influence of impressionism one way or another can be traced in the art of all nations. In the Egyptian and early Greek representations of men, the figure was always shown in a position which displayed every limb and the profile of the face. This clearly satisfied the mental impression of the observer inasmuch as it coincided with his knowledge of the attributes of the human being. Savages are naturally impressionists, and produce admirable eye impressions of animals, etc., in their carvings on spear handles and other instruments. This may be seen in the artistic efforts of prehistoric man. The features which strike one most strongly remain in the mind; for example, if a raging lion were seen tearing through a forest, the mental impression would be flying mane and gleaming fangs, or look at a stormy sea from the shore and the mind-pictures carried away would be breaking billows and leaping spray.

If the *Odyssey* of Homer is read to a person with a musical ear, and an appreciation for poetry, though he does not understand Greek, he has great pleasure in listening to the exquisite harmony of sounds. This is incontestable proof that, to a considerable extent, the glamour of poetic verse consists in the effect produced on the human mind by the sounds which result from the poet's arrangement of words. In this respect it may be pointed out that a beautiful harmony of colours is pleasing to the eye, in the same way that the sound of Homer's poetry is gratifying to the ear. This is quite apart from the design or composition of the picture or the meaning of the poem. It has occasionally been remarked by scoffing observers who prefer the niggling school that Turner's pictures, if turned upside down, would look about as well as they do when hung in their proper position, and although these remarks were made in a satirical spirit, it is undoubtedly true that a great many of Turner's pictures placed sky down would still present a fascinating harmony of colours most satisfactory to the eye of the observer who possesses the faculty of art perception. The beautiful arrangement of colours which can be seen in all Turner's pictures appeals in a decorative as well as

pictorial sense, and it is always pleasing to the human vision. The beauty of colours which harmonise is evident to every one. The autumn colours in decaying leaves, for example, or even the colours in a fine sunset, portray no particular form, but simply consist of brilliant and variegated hues. Almost every one can learn to draw with more or less success, but the colour faculty is born with the individual who possesses it. If one cannot colour well naturally, no amount of effort, no amount of study will enable him to attain this quality. The true colourist produces his effect by instinct and hardly needs to seriously reflect whether certain colours harmonise with others or not. His eye and hand work together, and he gets the required results through intuition. When a painter lacks this quality, though by means of a clever brain and hard work he gains a certain proficiency in the handling of colours which may deceive an inexperienced observer, laboured effect is usually quite apparent to the critic, and aerial perspective is never satisfactory. The artist who possesses the true colour faculty can produce what effect he likes with a casually set pallet which he has picked up, but the other must arrange his colours with mathematical precision. It is

very seldom, indeed, we meet with a great colourist.

In the initial stages of man's artistic education he likes effects which are obviously pretty and pleasing to the eye, such as warm sunshine, moonlit seas, and white sails in the distance. To any one who has a liking for and gives considerable attention to the Fine Arts, a period comes when he ceases to admire what is obviously pretty but lacking in deeper charm. He becomes tired of what is trivial although dressed in attractive tinsel, and desires something which is removed from the commonplace or meretricious. To the individual who is unsophisticated as regards pictures, the most striking artistic productions are those which give him a wealth of realistic details so that the objects represented seem photographically to stand out from the canvas. In the next stage literary motive is what attracts him, and such pictures as the "Execution of Mary Queen of Scots" appeal to him with a peculiar fascination. It is the sentiment attached to the subject of the picture which interests him and he forgets to consider its artistic value.

Occasionally one sees a pictorial effect so cleverly executed that it could almost be taken for a real picture, as celluloid is sometimes taken for ivory.

It is the work of a clever handler of the brush and pallet, but whose gifts do not rise much above mediocrity, which is the curse of the man with the highly strung artistic nature, and the inability to execute in a manner which satisfies his ambition. Temperament and craftsmanship, as regards painting, may be compared to musical taste and voice in singing. That is to say, one may have an excellent musical taste and a very indifferent voice. There are many individuals with all the qualities necessary to success in the art world, excepting executive ability, that is, craftsmanship, voice, or whatever medium is used in expressing the artistic motive.

It is common to extol the labours of the plodding individual, and it has become almost proverbial that genius is the capacity for laborious continuity; but a greater mistake never was made. Certainly the ability to undertake long periods of concentrated exertion is almost invariably possessed by great men, but at the same time continuous hard work in itself will never substitute the magic quality which belongs only to the man of genius. But as we live in an era during which money-making is the sole occupation of almost every one, even the great artist does not always produce the best work he can, but finds himself drawn into the

vortex of commercialism, with the result that he is forced sometimes to paint pictures which command the biggest price and suit the purchaser with the longest purse. The artist of the Middle Ages generally did his best. He was not surrounded with the specious snares of modern civilisation, and found his chief pleasure in successful craftsmanship, with the result that excellence of the highest kind is shown in a multitude of pictures painted by medieval painters. If an artist paints pictures to please the public he must produce what is essentially common, as the comprehension of the man in the street does not extend beyond what is common. Individuality, which is the stamp which genius leaves on all its productions, must necessarily wage continuous warfare against tradition and the commonplace. Painting is less satisfactory as an art than poetry or music, for the reason that a painting cannot be multiplied as a literary or musical composition can, and this to some extent accounts for the genuine appreciation of painting being rarer than that of poetry or music. Most artists lack the true colour faculty. The other executive qualities of their art they have mastered, but, not having the power to handle colours, they fail to produce really great work. One might as

well call the tinkling of a banjo music as consider the paintings of certain popular artists as pictures.

In criticising pictures, ideality is sometimes confounded with ingenuity, for example, Sir Noel Paton in his pictures illustrating the quarrel between Oberon and Titania distinctly shows ideality of a kind, but not in the higher sense of the word. The extraordinary creations which he shows in these pictures are ingenious to a marvellous extent, but the ideality which compels lofty thoughts is conspicuous by its absence. Many peculiar pictorial effects have been produced by artists, which, though in themselves quite unworthy of being applied to pictorial art, have caused considerable sensation for a brief period. An example of this is a picture which represents the head of our Saviour, having His eyes painted in such a way that they are seen either closed or open, according as the observer's mind influences his vision, but effects of this kind are like the pirouetting on the great toe by a premier danseuse, very clever and extraordinary, but not artistic. In painting, as in poetry, the moral and immoral can be expressed. Nevertheless, art in itself is neither moral nor unmoral. Here again, the temperament of the artist dominates his work and produces what

the world calls moral and immoral situations. We have religious music and music which is not religious, and can have religious art and unreligious art, but art in itself is neither one nor the other.

Decorative art is distinct from the art which produces pictures, although pictures are generally used for the purpose of decoration. This branch of art may be said to embrace mural ornamentation and pictorial and other artistic effects which are treated in a somewhat conventionalised style. That is to say, a liberty may be taken with subjects as regards form, colour, and composition. The artist may work in this manner without offending any of the canons of the artistic world. The chief purpose of decorative art is to produce pleasing harmonies of line and colour with suggestiveness in keeping with the nature of the subject decorated, be it a building, book, or lady's dress. In this form of art atmosphere is of little or no importance other than possibly in fresco panels painted as pictures in realistic style. There the same laws that dominate other pictures have to be applied. The artist may be forced to some extent to attune these laws in a conventional sense to the spirit of the surroundings.

In brief, a picture, in the larger sense of the

word, that is to say a picture which is the production of a great artist, is the representation of something on a piece of canvas, paper, or a surface of any kind, which recalls to the mind pleasing memories, stimulates the imagination with a sense of the mysterious, and carries the mind of the observer into the regions of poetry. The subject may be anything which allows the artist scope for his individuality and for artistic rendering, and must be of such a nature that the spirit of sentiment and romance asserts itself from the canvas. The execution must be broad in its treatment, for nature always presents broad effects to the human eye, as the colour of the atmosphere mitigates the hardness of details and softens anything which in itself may be hard and mechanical looking. Truthful aerial perspective and harmonious colouring are the profoundest qualities in painting. Individuality must be preserved, as every one is apt to tire of what continually presents the same characteristics. As the twentieth century advances individuality inclines to disappear altogether, and people become more and more like each other in habits and manners as time progresses, yet deep down in the depths of every one's heart there is a liking for what is

original, bizarre, and removed from the commonplace. The commonplace after all in many cases is the commonplace simply because we are all too familiar with it.

Good drawing is a necessary quality in painting. In itself it may produce excellent black-and-white pictures. But to get it in combination with good colouring is very hard indeed, and a picture must show both before it can be considered a great work of art. If old subjects are utilised for pictures they must be presented in a new guise. This pleases human nature in its demand for picturesque change. If one is determined to improve his capacity for art criticism, he should only study pictures which authorities acknowledge to be really great works and avoid those which do not evince superlative craftsmanship. These latter productions are like printed books which are not literature, and pages of clefs, staves, and notes which are not music. Put beside really great works of art, they suggest but the rattle of mediocrity's kettledrum compared with the trumpet blast of genius. The more familiar a novice becomes with good pictures the quicker will his critical capacity improve.

CHAPTER III

RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN MUSIC, PAINTING, POETRY, AND OTHER ARTS

ART may be divided into a number of branches: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, the drama, acting, and possibly some minor variations. Science investigates and demonstrates truth; Art expresses beauty as well as truth, but as sometimes there is no beauty in realism, the artist may idealise what he sees. The same quality which stamps the writings of certain authors as literature, proclaims the works of certain painters as pictures, and in the concert hall it enables us to instantly recognise whether or not what we hear is music in the true sense of the word. To go further, it is the same something which the poet infuses into his verse which makes it poetry. Comparisons between sister arts may be made in a hundred ways. For example, Byron's *Don Juan* is on a plane with the sensuous music of the Moonlight

Sonata, Ruben's figure pictures, or the roof decorations of the Palace at Versailles.

A great many interesting analogies can be made between music and painting. The middle sunlit distance, merging into a dark and cloudy background, can be likened to a change of key in music, from a bright and sparkling major into a gloomy minor, and in comparing painting and poetry, it is quite obvious that as words alone, apart from ideas, can produce quality in poetry, so colours harmoniously grouped do the same in painting. At the same time, each branch has its own significations, although they all belong to one family, and circumstances under which the particular poetic medium reaches us have something to do with its particular effects on us. In painting we must permit the existence of different styles as in the same way in music we have different styles. Even in literature the same parallel exists. We have Carlyle with his splintered thunderbolts, and the smooth-finished prose of Addison, each excellent in its own way. In painting and in music it is a simple matter to find men, the characteristics of whose compositions present a close analogy to the style of certain writers. Many of our great literary men were impressionists, and in a sentence would

conjure into existence a picture which is more convincing than pages of detail. The impressionist painter endeavours to put on canvas the impression which is produced on his senses when he regards nature.

Fine examples of impressionistic music and literature are found where least expected. The hymns sung by the Jubilee Singers emphatically illustrate this. Among them we find many beautiful emotional compositions, having all the characteristics of impressionism. The writers of these hymns were very often the composers of the tunes. The highly strung Black, possessing a genius for music, though of a limited kind, hears a Negro preacher who is gifted with emotional oratory. The preacher adopts as the subject of his discourse "The crossing of the river Jordan," and possibly repeats time and again, while he preaches, that "Jordan's River must be crossed by everybody." The mind of the listening musician receives impressions which crystallise finally into the sentence, "'Tis Jordan's River that we all must cross," and in an ecstasy of religious and poetic fervour he composes the hymn with which we are all familiar. In a like manner, one can imagine the Negro preacher repeating a number of times, while

he discourses, "Steal away to Jesus, steal away Home," and again the listener carries away this beautiful mental impression, and another marvellously emotional hymn is composed. In Gray's *Elegy*, impressionism makes itself felt very clearly in the following line: "The breezy call of incense-breathing morn." When this line falls upon the ear, into the imagination at once leaps the suggestion of bees, butterflies, morning sunshine, flowers, and birds. In literature the more a writer can call into existence a host of ideas and mind-pictures by a few words, the stronger and greater is the merit of his work. In the same way, Turner's water-colours, which represent pictorial impressionism in the highest sense, are full of poetical suggestion.

The ordinary individual, though naturally possessing good taste, has to pass through a series of stages before he can understand pictorial art in the true sense of the word. The same may be said of poetry, music, and the drama. The unsophisticated mind appreciates to the full the sweetness of such songs as "Home sweet Home," "Auld Lang Syne," and music of a similar kind. The poetry which is liked best by the same individual doubtless will be of a kindred nature to "The Blind Boy," Mrs. Hemans' "Treasures of the Deep," etc.

At this period of development, he will prefer a beautifully printed, highly finished chromograph to the works of Turner himself, but by associating with things artistic a second stage is reached. Here the paintings that will be most admired are those of the late Waller Paton, John Faed, Sir Noel Paton, and others who produce very highly finished works, while such poems as those by Longfellow and Tom Moore will possibly be liked better than any others, and a musical partiality will be shown for popular operas like *Maritana*, *The Bohemian Girl*, and some minor oratorios. Finally, if his tastes continue to develop, he prefers paintings by artists possessing the highest genius, such as Turner and Valasquez, and he will now choose the music of such giants as Beethoven and Wagner before that of other popular musicians, whose works, though perhaps possessing more sweetness, lack the magnificence and grandeur of *The Flying Dutchman* and Beethoven's "Symphonies." His literary opinions, if he develop these on the same lines, will now possibly quite admit that the greatest poets are Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. Of course it is quite understood that it is impossible to live on such pabulum as is provided by these great men. Solid

roast or boiled beef is excellent, but one requires something lighter along with it; and so in the artistic world the most learned critic who will sit spellbound while Wagner seizes his soul in an iron grasp and compels him to his innermost being to listen, will occasionally spend a pleasant hour in a music hall or at a ballad concert. In the same way, we cannot spend all our spare time in reading *Paradise Lost*. We will want to have a look at the newspapers and magazines sometimes, and it is quite possible to admire less ambitious productions, although one is able to appreciate the artistic value of a great picture. Etchings and light decorative work have their own merits, artistically speaking, and can always give pleasure to the observer.

In developing in this way a person will pass through many minor changes, of course, but all will prove that association with what is artistic, in the larger sense of the word, is necessary before one becomes a true art critic. It is a matter of education, and, as in other matters, when one's faculties prompt him to think that a beautifully finished water-colour is perfect, though it totally lack any of the higher qualities of a picture, he believes that the admiration of some men for Turner is affectation. The same type of individual

may sit down to listen to a classical instrumental concert, and be fully convinced that the ecstatic appreciation of some of the listeners round him is pretence only.

As regards dramatic art, the taste in this country for what is only light, bright, and well staged, exists to a degree which is almost unbelievable. A reflective person attending one of our popular musical comedies is amazed at the way in which the audience receives it, while at the representation of a classical drama, even by Shakespeare, plenty of vacant seats can always be found. Of all branches of art in Great Britain the stage is the one which caters most for the light and meretricious. Of course the individuals who provide entertainment to the public cannot be blamed as demand creates supply, and in this commercial age business is business. At the same time, to reflective people this is a matter for grave regret. It is satisfactory to know that no other art provides what is cheap and commonplace to the same extent, though we must admit that our Royal Academy shows are very depressing exhibitions, indeed, to the serious art critic, and that most of the books published in this country are not literature.

The Japanese and Chinese consider very few of our Occidental pictures as coming under the category of art, in the larger sense of the word. They believe that their decorative productions are more truly artistic than the recognised style of European paintings. To them the usual picture which is admired in this country is simply an illustrated story, while they claim that their works are instinct with poetry. Their painters are artists with talent for drawing, colouring, and grouping, and their treatment of any subject always leaves scope for the poetic imagination. The spirit of sane impressionism, which is evident in their works, is the dominant keynote of almost all great art. It may be argued that the lack of definition, which is characteristic of impressionists, suggests a mind not truly balanced, but it must be admitted, as Macaulay says, that to create poetry a certain unsoundness of mind is required. The plain, matter-of-fact individual lives in a most methodic way, and never allows his feelings to carry him away. He cannot understand what actuates a poet when he writes a poem, or even the feeling which is evoked in one who possesses the power to understand poetry emotionally, though lacking the creative faculty. Though the workaday individual is of sounder

mind, materially speaking, than he who sometimes allows his imagination to bear him into the regions of fancy, at the same time no one will deny that the power to write poetry, compose music, or paint great pictures at once stamps its possessor as a being occupying a higher plane of life than one whose thoughts are never influenced by emotion except from a purely material consideration. There are intelligent persons who can criticise poetry and kindred arts in regard to the technical qualities which are involved in all art more or less, but who completely miss that indefinite something which constitutes poetry, whether it be in a poem, picture, or piece of music. Without this indefinite something, craftsmanship, colour and form in painting, ideas and rhythm in verse, composition and harmony in music, may be perfect, yet both fail through lacking this indescribable quality. It is quite impossible to tell what it is, but one can feel it if one reads verses by great poets, listens to the music of an eminent composer, or gazes at a harmony in colours. He discovers poetry and mystery which seem to call to his spiritual being through a kind of sixth sense. One who has not this faculty for appreciating what is poetic and romantic loses much in this workaday world.

Poetry can ennoble the humblest occupation, and associate romance with the most commonplace events. When a beautiful piece of music is played, the listener, whose being is inspired by this quality, is transported into another plane of existence. He is now at sea in a tempestuous storm, now amid sunshine in a Southern clime, now surveying the world as a philosopher, now he is possessed of great power in critical times, now he feels the passion of love, and magical changes of situation follow each other in an ecstatic trance, to which the listener, whose nature is not imbued with the capacity to understand poetry and romance, must ever be a stranger. He, while he listens, hears pretty music only. Some people contend that music is the greatest of all arts. They claim that painters either imitate nature or create something, which, though original in one sense, is adapted from nature. Whether the poets' verses may be subjective or objective he either describes nature or human hopes, passions and feelings. But the musician has nothing on which to lean when he writes a composition, so everything that is in his music is born within himself, and is absolutely his own creation, unless we consider imitative forms of music, such as the "Anvil Song,"

and in discussing music in the larger sense of the word, compositions of that kind must be excepted.

Poetry, whether in the form of art, music, or literature, is the cry of the human soul whose inquiries into the infinite problems which surround human life end in failure and despair. Carlyle associated poetry with the inexorable march of time, and the truth of his belief is quite indisputable. The poem or picture is simply a faint suggestion of one of the kaleidoscopic views which our inner being sees for a fleeting moment; then it is lost for ever. The witching glamour of the past paints with roseate hues, episodes, and memories, which, when they belonged to the present, seemed commonplace enough, and it is the duty of the painter to suggest this in his work, as well as that subtle something, which during our life we are all looking for, and which, alas, we never find. Possession seems to destroy the charm with which we imbue our desires, yet in spite of our disappointment we still feel that at some time we will experience what we have dreamt of from childhood upwards, and at last will find what we have been striving after all our lives. If any happening at all approaches what we so often dream of, while it

still passes we are unaware of its existence and before we can grasp its significance it has already become the past.

Of course it is only in a broad sense that the various kinds of art can be brought together as being practically one and the same thing with poetry. Each has its own qualities, and produces its own effects on the human mind. Further, particular individual bias must be reckoned with, as one art may attract and have a peculiar influence upon one person, though he may not be interested in the others at all. For example, some people have a highly strung artistic temperament, but no ear for music. The wonderful power that music possesses over most people cannot inspire a single emotion in one whose ear is defective in the way of transmitting musical sounds to the brain, and, even if a person has an appreciation for art in its various branches, music and painting may have a totally different effect on him in a great many ways, but certainly through whatever medium art proclaims itself, it must be admitted that the motive power of them all, and the fascination which they exercise over the human mind, is based on poetry itself.

CHAPTER IV

ART APHORISMS

TO a considerable extent, the critic interprets a picture according to his temperament and partialities.

Impressionism, as moonlight or a little mist softens a landscape, ameliorates what is aggressive.

Truthful aerial perspective and harmonious colouring are the profoundest qualities in painting.

The classic is very apt to degenerate into something from which the spirit has disappeared and nothing but form is left.

Art convinces us in proportion to the qualities which, grouped together, make a demand on the critic which he cannot resist.

In the psychic world there is a secondary sense of proportion, and artistic and poetic efforts must fall into line with this standard.

Portraits reproduced must have a kind of allegorical picturesqueness in their treatment before the critic can call them pictures.

The quality which is paramount in determining the value of pictures, is one which enables us to escape the power of the merely material.

A picture is not an attempt to mathematically reproduce, but of an effort to convey realistically in a poetic sense.

To any one who has a liking for and gives considerable attention to the Fine Arts, a period comes when he ceases to admire what is obviously pretty, but lacking in deeper charm.

One might as well call the tinkling of a banjo music, as consider the paintings of certain popular artists as pictures.

Deep down in the depths of every one's heart

there is a liking for what is original, bizarre, and removed from the commonplace.

Commonplace pictures, put beside really great works of art, suggest but the rattle of mediocrity's kettledrum, compared with the trumpet blast of genius.

Many of our great literary men were impressionists, and in a sentence would conjure into existence a picture which is more convincing than pages of detail.

In literature, the more a writer can call into existence a host of ideas and mind-pictures by a few words, the stronger and greater is the merit of his work.

The Anglo-Saxon race does not naturally possess artistic appreciation to the same extent as the Latins do. This may be seen if we survey the monuments in Westminster Abbey.

A great many expressions have been invented to describe the meaning of the word "Art," but

the results are satisfactory only to particular individuals according to their beliefs and likings.

It would be impossible for highly strung and emotional individuals to endure this life but for the subtle bonds which knit them together through the medium of art in its widest sense.

An audience which is being entertained by a number of performers may listen approvingly to most of them, but when they hear the "real thing" they are startled out of themselves.

The capacity to write poetry indicates a certain amount of mental bias, which, while we hesitate to call it unsoundness of mind, nevertheless evinces a lack of intellectual balance.

The existence of another world of thought of some kind must be admitted by the most prosaic individual, and in discussing art we must project ourselves into this other atmosphere.

Humanity is dominated by emotion. It governs the world's developments and shapes its

history, and is much more powerful in wielding the rod of destiny than mere intellect.

Art may mean decadence of the pristine animal qualities of mankind, but in these days of sociological advancement, is this not a step forward on the evolutionary road?

There is a certain standard of beauty which the mind conjures into existence in a vague manner, and the artist of genius is continually endeavouring to produce this in his works.

It has been said that we are all poets but simply lack the ability to give proper expression to what we feel, and the same thing applies to painting and any other branch of art.

In painting there are various qualities that the critic will look for. To begin with, there must be a suggestion of poetry in the composition, and a certain sense of mystery which stimulates the fancy.

Painting has no more to do with morality than literature or music has. The ethical aspect of a

picture does not influence its merits in the slightest degree. It is treatment which gives quality.

The love of hard microscopic still-life effect in a picture, which is inherent in many people, springs from the fact that they know such detail exists, but they do not consider the qualifying influence of relative position and atmosphere.

If the *Odyssey* of Homer is read to a person with a musical ear, and an appreciation of poetry, though he does not understand Greek, he has great pleasure in listening to the exquisite harmony of sounds.

The artist who possesses the true colour faculty can produce what effect he likes with a casually set pallet which he has picked up, but his less fortunate compeer must arrange his colours with mathematical precision.

The ordinary individual, though naturally possessing good taste, has to pass through a series of stages before he can understand pictorial art in the true sense of the word. The same may be said of poetry, music, and the drama.

Poetry, whether in the form of art, music, or literature, is the cry of the human soul whose inquiries into the infinite problems which surround human life end in failure and despair.

It is only in a broad sense that the various kinds of art can be brought together as being practically one and the same thing with poetry. Each art has its own qualities and produces its own effects on the human mind.

Through whatever medium art proclaims itself, it must be admitted that the motive power of them all, and the fascination which they exercise over the human mind, is based on poetry itself.

When prehistoric man decorated any of his possessions, he reproduced the mental impression of what he saw, and it is invariably found that all his carvings or drawings of animals convey life and motion to a wonderful extent. He was, in fact, a true impressionist.

Fashion asserts itself in the art world as well as in other walks of life. The works of certain painters or decorators become popular, perhaps through the

personality of the artist, the influence of his friends, or incidental happenings.

The artificiality of modern civilisation, and the dominating power of commercialism, may often obscure for a period the merits of men of genius and their productions. But even these forces give way before the march of time.

Every picture ought to be imbued with sentiment, but it must be suggested only to the imagination. The painter should do no more than this, nor should the poet. This carries with it a feeling of the mysterious, which is the chief charm of romance.

A picture with the detail of every object, whether near or far, shown with absolute clearness, is often mistaken for a most realistic picture. In actuality it is more of a mechanical drawing than anything else, and does not represent nature.

Even the sordid mind must feel at times that there is something better and nobler than materialism can produce at its best, and the art which carries us into the ways which lead to this mysterious region is truthful, elevating, and sincere.

Poetry, through the medium of music, literature, the drama, or art, enables us to satisfy the desire of our better nature and to escape the monotony of workaday existence, and the more power a picture has in achieving this, the greater it is as a work of art.

The artist of the Middle Ages generally did his best. He was not surrounded with the specious snares of modern civilisation, and found his chief pleasure in successful craftsmanship, with the result that excellence of the highest kind is shown in a multitude of pictures by medieval painters.

In Gray's *Elegy*, impressionism makes itself felt very clearly in the following line: "The breezy call of incense-breathing morn." When this line falls upon the ear, into the imagination at once leaps the suggestion of bees, butterflies, morning sunshine, flowers, and birds.

Inability of the human eye to see detail at a distance, the colouring effect of the air itself, and the fact that while we look at a certain point in the landscape, all the surrounding objects are dim and

hazy, make aerial perspective a quality which presents almost insuperable difficulty to the artist.

All of us can picture a canvas with a magnificent composition looking out from it, but as soon as we seize pencil and brush and try to reproduce what our mental eye saw, the vision fades and disappears. In the same way, on looking at a beautiful landscape, or a sunset across the sea, the spirit of a poem passes through the mind and in a measure its purport seems clear, but as soon as we lift the pen our fairy castle has vanished for ever.

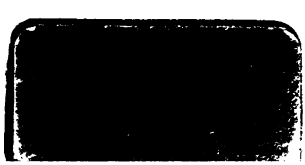
A painting such as the "Motherless Child," in which a poor waif is depicted sitting cold and hungry, unobserved by the passing crowd, appeals to the better part of human nature, but it does not make the picture artistic. It might be very badly painted indeed, but, nevertheless, the maternal instinct in every woman who regarded it might be touched at the thought of the lone infant.

It has occasionally been remarked by scoffing observers who prefer the niggling school, that Turner's pictures, if turned upside down, would look about as well as they do when hung in their proper

position, and, although these remarks were made in a satirical spirit, it is undoubtedly true that a great many of Turner's pictures, placed sky down, would still present a fascinating harmony of colours most satisfactory to the eye of the observer who possesses the faculty of art perception.

There is an indefinite something which constitutes poetry, whether it be a poem, picture, or piece of music, to describe which is an absolute impossibility. Without this indefinite something, craftsmanship, colour and form in painting, ideas and rhythm in verse, composition and harmony in music, may be perfect, yet fail through lacking this indescribable quality. It is impossible to tell what it is, but one can feel it if one reads verses by great poets, listens to the music of an eminent composer, or gazes at a harmony in colours by a great artist.

When a beautiful piece of music is played, the listener who has the faculty for appreciating what is poetic and romantic, is transported into another plane of existence. He is now at sea in a tempestuous storm, now amid sunshine in a Southern clime, now surveying the world as a philosopher, now he is possessed of great power in critical times, now

he feels the passion of love, and magical changes of situation follow each other in an ecstatic trance, to which the listener, whose nature is not imbued with this capacity, must ever be a stranger. He, while he listens, hears pretty music only.

The various qualities of our ancestors reproduced in ourselves and compounded with other qualities resulting from environment and accident, produce peculiarities, eccentricities, and contradictions of character, without which life would be dull in the extreme. Thus we meet with the strong-willed person with the puny body, the giant with the feeble mind, the ugly man with the beautiful soul, the individual who has the mind of a satyr with the face of an Apollo, and a hundred and one paradoxical combinations which keep romance alive in the most matter-of-fact age.